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Attorneys for Plaintiffs and the Proposed Class

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

ADAM SHAW, PETER GOLIGHTLY,
JUSTIN TURNER and JOSHUA
STANSFIELD as individuals and on behalf
of all others similarly situated and the
general public,

Plaintiffs,

v.

WIZARDS OF THE COAST, LLC,

Defendant.

Case No.: 5:16-cv-01924

**SUPPLEMENTAL DECLARATION OF ADAM
SHAW IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS' MOTION
FOR CONDITIONAL CERTIFICATION AND TO
FACILITATE NOTICE UNDER 29 U.S.C. § 216(b)**

1 I, ADAM SHAW, hereby declare as follows:

2 1. I am a named Plaintiff and class representative in the within collective and class action
3 for the purpose of recovering unpaid wages, overtime and penalties owed to me and other Judges by
4 Wizards.

5 2. I have personal knowledge of the facts stated in this declaration, and I could and would
6 competently testify in conformity with those facts if called up to do so.

7 3. I currently reside in Manchester, Connecticut.

8 4. I have worked as a judge for Wizards of the Coast, LLC (hereinafter "Wizards") in
9 connection with the collectable card and fantasy roll playing game Magic: the Gathering (hereinafter
10 "Magic") from 2005 through 2011 and from 2014 to January 2017.

11 5. Based on my years of experience as a Magic judge, I am familiar with numerous
12 documents published by Wizards and disseminated to Judges through Wizards' online presence,
13 including Wizards' website and other Magic websites used by Wizards and Magic judges to participate
14 in Magic-related discussions, to share Wizards policies and policy documents, and to find information
15 about Wizards and Magic. Like thousands of other Magic judges, it was necessary as a part of my
16 work as a Magic judge to learn, stay familiar with, be aware of, direct other Judges to and generally
17 have a working knowledge of the materials contained on these various websites, including, among
18 others, magic.wizards.com, blogs.magicjudges.org, wpm.wizards.com, and www.wizards.com.

19 6. I have personally reviewed the Declaration of Ross Cornell in Support of Plaintiff's
20 Motion for Conditional Certification and to Facilitate Notice Under 29 U.S.C. § 216(b) ("Cornell
21 Decl") and I have examined the exhibits thereto, including Exhibits A - K and M - R. The following
22 paragraphs refer to these Exhibits.

23 7. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit A** as a document published by Wizards and available
24 on Wizards' website online at <https://www.wizards.com/magic/planeswalkerpoints> that includes
25 Wizards' description of Planeswalker Points, progress, points formulas and scoring, among other
26 things. I viewed this article most recently at the foregoing web address on July 2, 2017.

27 8. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit B** as a document available online at
28 <https://blogs.magicjudges.org/conduct/files/2014/12/MagicJudgeCode.pdf> as a current version of the
official *Magic Judge Code*. I am familiar with this version of the *Magic Judge Code* in the regular
course and scope of my work as a Magic Judge and I viewed it most recently at the foregoing web
address on July 2, 2017.

1 9. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit C** as a document published by Wizards entitled
2 “*What does it mean to be a certified judge?*” This version bears the disclosure “© 1995 - 2016
3 Wizards of the Coast, LLC,” and is a document I am familiar with and I have seen distributed amongst
4 judges.

5 10. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit D** as a web page published by Wizards entitled “Find
6 a Judge” that can be found online at <http://wpn.wizards.com/en/article/find-judges-free-tool>. I viewed
7 this web page at the foregoing web address most recently on July 2, 2017.

8 11. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit E** as an article published by Wizards available online
9 at <http://magic.wizards.com/en/events/resources/judges> entitled “What is a Judge?” I viewed this
10 article most recently at the foregoing web address on Wizards’ website on July 2, 2017.

11 12. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit F** as an article published by Wizards that is available
12 online at <http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/rise-your-responsibility-2011-2010-11-29>
13 entitled “Rise to Your Responsibility 2011.” I viewed this article most recently at the foregoing web
14 address on Wizards’ website on July 2, 2017.

15 13. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit G** as a copy of the *Magic: the Gathering*
16 *Tournament Rules*, a document I am familiar with in my work as a Magic judge. This particular
17 version is dated April 28, 2017, which I believe to be the most recent version. I viewed this document
18 most recently online at http://wpn.wizards.com/sites/wpn/files/attachements/mtg_mtr_28apr17_en.pdf
19 on July 2, 2017.

20 14. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit H** as a Wizards web page entitled “*Friday Night*
21 *Magic*” that is available online at <http://wpn.wizards.com/en/fridaynightmagic>. I viewed this
22 document most recently on July 2, 2017 at the foregoing web address.

23 15. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit I** as an article entitled “Why New Tournament
24 Organizers Should Get Help From a DCI Certified Judge” that Wizards published on its website at
25 <http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dc/sanction/helpfromJudges>. I viewed this document most
26 recently on July 2, 2017 at the foregoing web address.

27 16. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit J** as a publication entitled “Judge Levels –
28 Official Resources.” I viewed this document most recently on July 2, 2017 and recognize it to be
genuine.

 17. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit K** as a copy of Wizards’ DCI Homepage available
online at <http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dc/welcome>. I viewed this document most recently
on July 2, 2017 at the foregoing web address.

1 18. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit M** as a copy of Wizards' Judge Uniform Policy, a
2 document I viewed most recently on July 2, 2017. Wizards' uniform policy is well known by judges,
3 who are required to comply with the policy as one of the terms and conditions of their employment.

4 19. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit N** as a copy of a Wizards publication entitled "Team
5 Leading." I viewed this document most recently on July 2, 2017.

6 20. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit O** as a copy of Wizards' web page entitled "Prize
7 Support Kits," available online at <http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dc/sanction/topprizesupport>.
8 I viewed this document most recently on July 2, 2017 at the foregoing web address.

9 21. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit P** as a copy of a Wizards publication entitled
10 "*Magic: the Gathering Release Tournament Handbook, 10th Ed., Core Set*," a document I am familiar
11 with and that I reviewed most recently on July 2, 2017.

12 22. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit Q** as a copy of a Wizards publication entitled
13 "*Customer Support - Organized Play: Wizards Accounts, DCI, and Planeswalker Points Support*." I
14 viewed this document most recently on Wizards' website at
15 http://wizards.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/2301/ on July 2, 2017.

16 23. I recognize **Cornell Decl. Exhibit R** as a copy of Wizards' website page entitled
17 "*Grand Prix*" that is available online at [http://magic.wizards.com/en/content/grand-prix-event-types-](http://magic.wizards.com/en/content/grand-prix-event-types-events)
18 [events](http://magic.wizards.com/en/content/grand-prix-event-types-events). I viewed this web page most recently on July 2, 2017.

19 24. In reviewing the foregoing Exhibits to the Cornell Declaration, I hereby attest that each
20 of them is a true and correct copy of the original and that each has either been an official publication
21 by Wizards or has been a document I have seen regularly circulated among Magic judges in the course
22 and scope of my work as a Magic judge.

23 25. Wizards' website is one of the primary sources of information for players and Judges
24 regarding Magic-related issues, Magic rules, and Wizards' policies, support and instruction. For
25 example, Wizards has numerous articles on its website which advise judging candidates regarding how
26 to study for judge exams, what to study, and methods for success advancing in judge levels. Wizards
27 embraces the criteria, actively encourages candidates to apply for selection as Magic judges, and offers
28 instruction and support intended to equip candidates for success in becoming Magic judges.

 26. Wizards provides support and instruction for judges on its website at
<http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/how-study-level-1-judge-certification-2006-02-08> entitled
"*How to Study for Level 1 Judge Certification*." I recognize this document as an article that walks
Magic judge candidates through Wizards' predefined process for becoming a Level 1 Judge. A true

1 and correct copy of Wizards' web page entitled "*How to Study for Level 1 Judge Certification*" is
2 attached hereto as **Exhibit A**. I viewed this article most recently at the foregoing web address on July
3 2, 2017.

4 27. Wizards provides support and instruction for judges on its website
5 <http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/studying-your-judge-exam-2009-08-17> entitled "*Studying*
6 *for Your Judge Exam*." I recognize this document as an article that acknowledges how difficult it is to
7 pass Wizards' judge-related examinations, provides encouragement and direction on how to study and
8 pass those examinations, and directs Judges to various online resources intended to aid Judges in
9 preparing to take the tests which Wizards admits are "actually really hard." A true and correct copy of
10 Wizards' web page entitled "*Studying for Your Judge Exam*" is attached hereto as **Exhibit B**. I viewed
11 this article most recently at the foregoing web address on July 2, 2017.

12 28. Wizards provides support and instruction for judges on its website at
13 <http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/working-towards-level-2-2008-09-09> entitled "*Working*
14 *Towards Level 2*." I recognize this document as an article that is intended to help level 1 judges who
15 want to become level 2, or who are interested in what is required of a level 2. It covers the differences
16 between the two roles, as well as how to improve your skills to those required of a level 2. A true and
17 correct copy of Wizards' web page entitled "*Working Towards Level 2*" is attached hereto as **Exhibit**
18 **C**. I viewed this article most recently at the foregoing web address on July 2, 2017.

19 29. Wizards provides support and instruction for judges on its website at
20 <http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/getting-level-2-2007-11-19> entitled "*Getting to Level 2*."
21 I recognize this document as an article that includes a description of the process of how to prepare as a
22 level 2 Magic judge candidate, makes recommendations, offers insight and gives direction to level 2
23 candidates. A true and correct copy of Wizards' web page entitled "*Getting to Level 2*" is attached
24 hereto as **Exhibit D**. I viewed this article most recently at the foregoing web address on July 2, 2017.

25 30. Wizards provides support and instruction for judges on its website at
26 <http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/l2-l3-2006-03-23> entitled "*From L2 to L3*." I recognize
27 this document as an article that includes a description of the process of how to prepare as a level 3
28 Magic judge candidate, makes recommendations, offers insight and gives direction to level 3
candidates. A true and correct copy of Wizards' web page entitled "*From L2 to L3*" is attached hereto
as **Exhibit E**. I viewed this article most recently at the foregoing web address on July 2, 2017.


31. Wizards provides support and instruction for judges on its website at
<http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/three-steps-level-3-2005-11-16> entitled "*Three Steps to*

1 *Level 3.*” I recognize this document as an article that includes instructions and suggestions on how to
2 prepare to pass the requirements to become a level 3 Magic Judge. One of the “steps” is for Judges to
3 “Work.” As this article states, “[t]his is fairly straightforward. Work at as many events as you possibly
4 can. Work at all RELs. Work in any capacity you can. Believe it or not, your experience picking up
5 trash can be just as valuable as scorekeeping.” A true and correct copy of Wizards’ web page entitled
6 “*Three Steps to Level 3*” is attached hereto as **Exhibit F**. I viewed this article most recently at the
7 foregoing web address on July 2, 2017.

8 32. Wizards provides support and instruction for judges on its website at
9 [http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/level-3-advancement-recommendation-guidelines-2002-](http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/level-3-advancement-recommendation-guidelines-2002-01-24)
10 [01-24](http://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/level-3-advancement-recommendation-guidelines-2002-01-24) entitled “*Level 3 Advancement Recommendation Guidelines*.” I recognize this document as
11 guidelines designed to give direction to expert-level judges who wish to recommend a level 2 judge for
12 advancement and serve as a resource for judges who wish to petition for advancement. A true and
13 correct copy of Wizards’ web page entitled “*Level 3 Advancement Recommendation Guidelines*” is
14 attached hereto as **Exhibit G**. I viewed this document most recently at the foregoing web address on
15 July 2, 2017.

16 33. Wizards’ unilateral and sudden suspension of twelve (12) U.S. Southeast Judges in
17 December, 2015 was an incident that sent ripples through the Judge community. I have reviewed
18 Helen Bergeot’s Declaration submitted in Opposition to Plaintiff’s Motion for Conditional
19 Certification. Helen Bergeot’s testimony at paragraph 38 appears to contradict the true facts – Wizards
20 suspended these twelve (12) judges unilaterally and informed the Judge Conduct Committee
21 *afterwards*. A true and correct copy of an article entitled “Applying a Lens of Clarity to the US
22 Southeast Suspensions” that is available online at [https://blogs.magicjudges.org/seacat/applying-a-](https://blogs.magicjudges.org/seacat/applying-a-lens-of-clarity-to-the-us-southeast-suspensions/)
23 [lens-of-clarity-to-the-us-southeast-suspensions/](https://blogs.magicjudges.org/seacat/applying-a-lens-of-clarity-to-the-us-southeast-suspensions/) is attached hereto as **Exhibit H**. I viewed this
24 document most recently on July 2, 2017.

25 I HEREBY DECLARE UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY UNDER THE LAWS OF THE
26 UNITED STATES THAT THE FOREGOING IS TRUE AND CORRECT. Executed this 5th day of
27 July, 2017 in Manchester, CT.

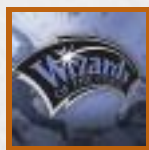
28
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ADAM SHAW

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HOW TO STUDY FOR LEVEL 1 JUDGE CERTIFICATION

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on February 8, 2006



By Wizards of the Coast

[Archive](#)



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To become a Level 1 certified judge you need to be both motivated and prepared. A high level of motivation is essential if you want to obtain your objectives. If you are not sure if you are motivated enough, reading "[What does it mean to be a certified judge?](#)" might help you. However, high motivation alone is not enough. Testing for Level 1 requires serious preparation and sometimes even motivated candidates fail because of inadequate preparation.

What to Study

There are a number documents that you need to study and most can be found at the [DCI Document Center](#):

- [Comprehensive Rules](#)
- Penalty Guidelines
- Universal Tournament Rules
- Floor Rules
- Other Policy Documents (Such as the Premier Event Invitation Policy and Judge Event Handbook.)

How to Study

The hardest part of the preparation is modifying the way you study to what you are studying. When you study the Comprehensive Rules you need to focus on the theory, definitions, and mechanics. To learn the Penalty Guidelines you need to understand “why” the rules work the way they work. The Universal Rules, Floor Rules, and Policy documents can just be memorized.

How to Study the Comprehensive Rules:

The Comprehensive Rules contain all the Magic the Gathering game rules (nothing about tournaments, penalties, and so on is included). The most common mistake is to read this document trying to learn as many examples as possible and then trying to compare the examples in the rules to the questions in the test: this method **doesn't work**.

The best way to learn the rules is to study definitions and mechanics; learning how to analyze the real situations that occur in the game and applying definitions and mechanics studied to actual situations. If you have never seen a card before, even if it's very complex, you can find in it some key terms that will help you to figure out what kind of ability it is and what kind of effect it will produce.

The questions every candidate should be able to answer easily after good preparation are:

- a. What's an ability? What kinds of abilities exist? How can I recognize a specific kind of ability reading the card and how can I know what kind of effect is generated?
- b. What's an effect? What kinds of effects exist? How can I recognize an effect and know what kind of effect it is?
- c. How do abilities and effects interact?
- d. What's the **exact** structure of a turn?
- e. What steps are required in order to play a spell or ability? In what order?
- f. How does the resolution of a spell or an ability work?
- g. How **exactly** does priority work?
- h. What are state-based effects and how do they work?

The following are two examples on how to apply this method:



Can I use the Isochron Scepter to play a spell that has been named with Meddling Mage?

In this situation, Meddling Mage limits only **cards** to be played. The definition of "card" contained in the rulebook says that a "card" is a physical card with the Magic card front and back. A copy is not a "card."

Knowing the definitions, it is possible to easily solve this question with no other information.

Example 2: Soul Net and Token Creatures.

PLF-1203



Can I gain the life from Soul Net if a token creature dies?

Most players know that a destroyed creature goes to the graveyard and most players know that a token is removed from the game when it leaves play.

How do you proceed with your analysis in this case?

Knowing the rules we can add another couple of questions:

Question: What kind of ability does Soul Net have? Answer: It is a triggered ability because it contains the word "whenever."

Question: Where does the creature go when it dies? Answer: It goes to the graveyard.

Question: What removes the token from the game? Answer: A state-based effect.

Question: When are state-based effects checked? Answer: State-based effects are checked when a player would receive priority and at the end of the cleanup step.

Analysis: Since Soul Net's ability is a triggered ability (you should know that triggered abilities continuously look for the trigger event or state) and state-based effects only remove the token from the graveyard just before the player receives priority. Therefore, you know that the token had the chance to trigger the Soul Net ability because (for a moment) the token went to the graveyard before being

How to Study the Penalty Guidelines:

After having learned the theory from the Comprehensive Rules, you now need to completely change your way to study because the Penalty Guidelines are a completely different type of document. In the previous document you had only to learn the mechanics and the definitions included in it, but you did not have to learn anything about "why" the rules work the way they work.

Now 80% of your studying will be focused on the "philosophy" of the penalties and only 20% will be spent to memorize things.

The Penalty Guidelines are a very important document for judge candidates and the most common mistake made is to read them as a rulebook. It's not a rulebook to know by heart! You cannot hope that every problem that could happen in a tournament could be described in a document.

The Penalty Guidelines contain all the categories of problems that could happen and the philosophy that allows you to fit all the problems you could encounter into a specific category.

For each category of problem, the Penalty Guidelines describe:

- The name of the category
- A definition of the category
- The most appropriate penalty for all infractions included in the category
- Some examples
- The philosophy for the kind of penalty
- How to fix the problem

When you have a problem to handle in a real tournament, you do not have a "keyword" that helps you to know what kind of category is most appropriate.

The best aid is to know all the definitions of the category "by meaning" and understand why a certain penalty is applied, why it is more lenient or more severe than another, and what kind of offences should be included in each category. This way, when you are called for a problem in a tournament, you'll be able to solve it in a consistent manner and explain it to players.

You also need to understand that all penalties aside from disqualifications are for

Once you find the right category for your case, you just have to apply the penalty and to fix the situation following the philosophy of the category you chose.

How to Study the Universal Rules, Floor Rules, and Policy Documents:

All the other documents are simpler to study. These documents contain very important information about tournament procedures and tournament policy. You simply have to memorize them all and apply them during your tournament; nothing to understand, just things to know.

Other Study Aides:

On the web there are some sites that can help you in studying the rules. The [WotC Judge Center](#) is the official international website where candidates can find all they need; including practice tests very similar to the official ones.

The site is now in the beta-test stage and is only open to current (or expired) DCI certified judges. It will be ready for all users in the first quarter of 2006. However, after working an event with a certified judge, you can ask that judge to enter a review on you. This will also give you access to the Center. It is password protected using your DCI player password. For more help with login and other Judge Center questions, please visit the Site Guide.

Another example of a helpful website is Saturday School. This is a great database of rules questions. A high level judge updates them and you can feel confident that the answers contained there are correct. The best way to use this kind of resource is to find a specific situation where you are not sure of the answer (but only **after** you have already tried to solve it applying the rules). Without focusing your study in this way you are just wasting your time. You can also use this resource to test your understanding by reading a random question and trying to solve it without reading the answer.

Talk with your Mentor:



The last suggestion I can give is to talk (or send an email) to the certified judge who is helping you to prepare for the test. Your mentor will be a great help for philosophical and policy questions that may be hard to find online. You also should

...with him or her, if possible, before the test.
Experience is one of the quickest ways to learn some important tricks and see first hand the differences between playing and judging. Usually it is recommended to work at least two events with your mentor before seeking testing from a level 3+. Sometimes it could be hard to attend events with your mentor (due to distance) but it is very important to do this because working with your mentor is part of the required preparation and part of the test itself. If you do not test with your mentor, have your mentor write an email to the judge who will test you in the week before.

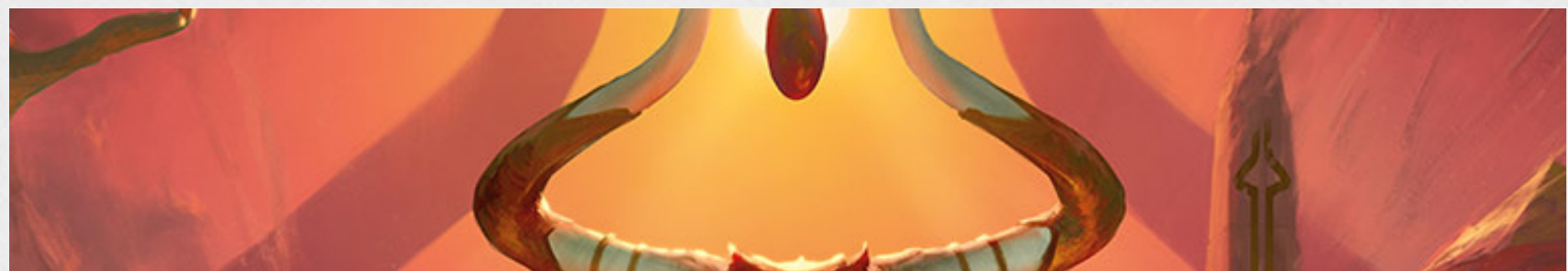
Good luck!

Diego Fasciolo, L3, Italy
dfasciolo@tiscalinet.it

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on February 8, 2006

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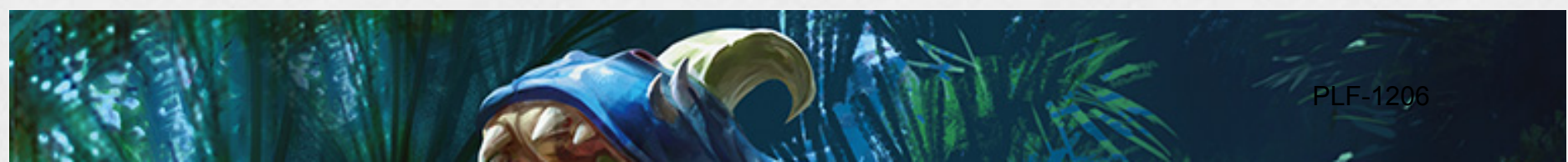


MAGIC ONLINE

JUNE 29, 2017

Hour of Devastation comes to Magic Online July 10!

Lee Sharpe



BLOG

JUNE 27, 2017

Magic Online Announcements June 27, 2017*Wizards of the Coast***WHERE TO PLAY AND BUY**

Find a location to buy or play
Magic: The Gathering near you.

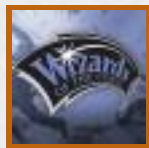
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STUDYING FOR YOUR JUDGE EXAM

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on August 17, 2009



By Wizards of the Coast

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Stating that the written portion of a judge test isn't difficult would be a lie. The truth is that they're actually really hard. Learning the rules well enough to pass one of those is not an easy task. The [Comprehensive Rules](#) is a large document by itself, and the other DCI documents add up more material to an already long compendium.

I've seen several individuals failing a written test because they underestimated it and didn't prepare well enough. I've noticed that quite often it's not that someone is just "bad at rules" or didn't study enough; it's that the studying methods they're using aren't adequate for them. We all have different ways of learning, and what's useful for some might be less efficient for others. Over the past few years, I've learned of many different study techniques that I'd like to share with everyone who's planning to undergo a judge test in the future, or who'd just like to get a better grasp on the rules.

Get a mentor.

This is not precisely needed, but I'll mention it from the start. Having a mentor with whom you can discuss the rules and throw questions at is going to be an immense advantage. The learning curve will be a lot faster. If you live in an already mature community, talk to the judge that you think is better at rules and mentoring, or the one that you find yourself most comfortable with. If there are no judges nearby, you can look up in the [Judge Center](#) to find judges relatively close to you; "close" doesn't mean "geographically close" only, as it could also mean culturally close, or

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class regarding the language you both speak. Do not hesitate to contact them: all judges understand that part of their judgely duties is to help other people become better judges!

Find a friend to study with.

As an alternative if you can't find a mentor, you can talk to that friend of yours who likes the rules and/or judging as much as you about studying together. Is there anything more stimulating than challenging a friend? Find difficult situations for your friend, and ask him/her to do the same for you. You could propose running a fun competition, and the winner of the week gets a beer/pizza/anything else. It will take you just a few weeks to become a real guru.

Surf on the boards.

There are boards dedicated to rules on almost all **Magic** websites, in almost all languages. Having to face many specific questions coming from specific card interactions and then having to go back to the basics of the rules to find an answer to numerous questions is a great way to identify better rules interactions and understand better how they work. Obviously, this works even better when you try to find the answer by yourself before reading the one made by whoever is the rules guru in charge of the board.

Practice tests.

The [Judge Center](#) is an extremely valuable tool, and its practice tests are very good for studying purposes. You'll always find something that you didn't know in the questions, and you can learn a lot if you pay attention to the explanations and the parts of the rules cited. These tests also give you an idea of what the real deal is. Yes, the format of the actual tests are exactly the same – it's the questions that change. I highly recommend to anyone planning to test for L1 to pass the Rules Advisor test, as this will entitle access to MTGRULES-L, the **Magic** rules mailing list, which is another valuable resource. It will also send a clear message to whoever might be testing you that you're taking this seriously – many testers expect you to be already a Rules Advisor. Be careful, though: although it seems easier and more accessible, taking tests is generally not the best way to start learning rules.

Read the rules completely.

This one is obvious, but highly underrated. You should read each one of the documents at least once. You'll notice that there are so many things that you didn't

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...and suggest ignoring parts of them that look "obvious." A common mistake I've noticed is that people ignore section 5 of the CR (Turn Structure) because they think they already know what's in there. Sure, as players, we all know that it's untap, upkeep, draw, main, etc., but do you really know what happens in the cleanup step, or what the proper names for each phase and step are? That's all described at length in that section.

Delete what you know.

Download the Word version of the Comprehensive Rules, and start reading it on your computer. Delete every paragraph that you already know. You'll end up with a copy with all of the things you haven't learned yet. Study from it, and keep deleting what you find that you've already learned. Another take is to copy everything you don't know yet into a separate, blank document.

Find actual examples.

The rules can be very abstract. You might read a paragraph, find that what's written in there makes sense, and move forward, without actually knowing what it all means and how and when to apply it to the game. Try to find actual game examples for the rules you read, and if you can't find one, then you know you have to think a bit more about it. Once you find an example, it should be easier for you to understand what the rule means. This goes well with the previous technique. You can establish that you need to find an example before you delete a paragraph.

Write notes on a working copy.

Print a copy of the rules, and write notes on the margins. You can write questions you might have, what you think are examples for specific parts, etc. You can then use them to further investigate, discuss it with other judges and/or your mentors, or reference them later.

Look for situations that might look similar, but are not.

It's fairly easy to mistake how some cards interact when the situation seems very similar to one that you already know. Looking for these, and understanding what makes them different will give you a better understanding of some rules that might be not so commonly used. For example, do you know what's the difference between the interaction of an Urborg, Tomb of Yawgmoth and a Blood Moon versus an animated Urborg, Tomb of Yawgmoth (perhaps with Animate Land) and Ovinize? What about the difference between Rival's Duel and Spikeshot Goblin
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Make lists and use acronyms.

There are several things in the rules that can be summed up in a bulleted or ordered list. For example, the steps to play a spell or ability, the state-based actions, the turn structure, the interaction of continuous effects (aka layers), among others. Studying from such a list should make it easier. Also, once you have a list, you can easily create an acronym that makes it easier for you to remember it, like the popular **DEBT** for protection (**D**amage, **E**nchanted, **B**locked, **T**argeted). Ute Kronnenberg, from Germany published an [article on using mnemonics](#) not long ago, and I recommend reading it.

Play the game!

The more you play the game, the more exposed you are to interesting card interactions. Even more so if you build decks to ensure that such interactions will come up. A deck full of Snakeforms, Giant Growths, Glorious Anthems, Figures of Destiny, and Mirroweaves will surely provide hilarious situations, while at the same time train you in the dark secrets of the dreaded layers. Playing the game increases your familiarity with the cards as well, which makes you a better judge in general. You could also play in **Magic Online**, in which you get the added benefit of watching precisely how some things work, like the turn structure, priority, and the stack.

Online references.

There is a myriad of online resources that you can mine for knowledge. Here are a couple of them:

- The [DCI webpage](#) has the Comprehensive Rules and DCI documents available for download.
- The #mtgjudge IRC channel, on the EfNet server.
- WotC's [MTG-L](#) mailing list, which is open.
- If you have access to WotC's closed mailing lists, such as [MTGRULES-L](#) or [DCIJUDGE-L](#), you can always browse the [LISTSERV](#) archives to read older posts and to search for specific rules and/or card interactions.



...various rules and/or judging columns, like [Cranial Insertion](#) or [The Riki Rules](#) (bonus, if you're a native Spanish-speaker, you might want to check the [Spanish version of Cranial Insertion](#).)

- Have I mentioned already how wonderful the [Judge Center](#) is? =)

I'm sure there are many other ways to study than the ones I've presented, and perhaps there's one that works better for you. In that case, feel free to plunge into the boards to share it with the rest of the world!

Carlos Ho

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on August 17, 2009

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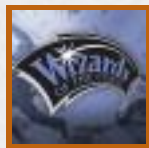
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WORKING TOWARDS LEVEL 2

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on September 9, 2008



By Wizards of the Coast

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This article is intended to help level 1 judges who want to become level 2, or who are interested in what is required of a level 2. It covers the differences between the two roles, as well as how to improve your skills to those required of a level 2.

Working towards Level 2

Once you've decided to try and become a level 2, the first step is to compare the responsibilities and required skills of a level 2 judge to those you already do / have, and decide which areas you need to improve. Other judges that you've worked with will be able to provide you with their assessments of your strengths and weaknesses, and these should coincide with your self-assessment, or point out areas that you hadn't realised needed work.

The main qualities of a level 2, compared to those required of a level 1 are:

- A more in-depth knowledge of the rules.
- A greater understanding of DCI policy and tournament procedure.
- Mentoring.
- Leadership and working effectively in a team.

Something to emphasise is that many level 1 judges have some or most of these qualities. Some level 1 judges have excellent rules knowledge, but have never been

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Some know exactly what they should be doing at any given point in a tournament, but get a little confused by state-based-whatsits. That's fine – everyone will need to work on different things.

Rules knowledge

To some extent, the level 1 test focuses on knowing **what** happens in a particular situation, in order to test that the candidate can correctly answer rules questions. The level 2 test also tests an understanding of **why** a particular answer is the correct one, as well as a much more technical knowledge of the rules (as well as just testing 'harder' interactions, involving more obscure rules and cards). The level 2 test also has a higher pass mark - 80% compared to 70% for the level 1 test.

There are several resources available to improve your rules knowledge.

- The Comprehensive Rules is available on the wizards website, but reading this monstrosity cover to cover is not necessarily the best way to study them (although, if this study technique works for you, go for it!).
- There are several websites that publish 'Ask the Judge' columns, where judges answer rules questions on a regular basis. These are great, for two reasons. They provide exposure to a wide variety of interactions (If you've read a question where someone stacks combat damage from a creature enchanted by Temporal Isolation, and then sacrifices the creature, and a player calls you to a game where this is happening, you'll have a much better idea of what's going on and what the player is trying to do), and they provide explanations with reference to the rules for the answers.
- MTGRules-L. Reading all of the rules questions and answers here will work in much the same way as reading rules articles online.
- #mtgjudge on EFNet - this is an IRC channel frequented by many judges, where there is almost always someone around to answer any rules question, explain policy, or discuss any other aspect of judging. Even if you don't have anything in particular to discuss, just listening to the various discussions is interesting.

Policy knowledge and tournament procedure

A level 2 judge is more likely to be the head judge of a medium-sized event, and thus handling appeals, investigations, and disqualifications. These are serious responsibilities, and it is essential that the judge has a good knowledge of current

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mentoring, and thus will need both to know what the 'correct' answer is to a particular policy question, as well as to explain why the policy is so. Alas, here is no supreme list of DCI policy. You can find much of it in the documents, such as the PG, UTR, and MFR. Some is passed on through mentoring from other judges ("Here's how you swoop for a deck check"), or learned from online judge articles (why some of these changes were made to the PG). Again, #mtgjudge is an excellent resource for discussion and explanation of any particular section of policy.

Mentoring

At a tournament, as well as being on the floor and answering judge calls, a level 2 judge should be observing other judges and giving feedback. This is by no means limited to level 2 and higher judges – shadowing other judges and discussing various aspects of rulings is always a learning experience for both judges involved. This is particularly important with the recent changes to the role of level 2 judges – a level 2 judge will soon be able to certify level 1 judges. Think about that – would you feel confident assessing a level 1 candidate? How would you assess them? How would you advise them to improve? The best way to learn this is to think back to your own certification interviews and tests. If possible, try and sit in on a level 1 interview while you're working towards level 2. If you're working a large event, like a Grand Prix or Nationals, ask whether you could sit in on a certification interview.

A word of caution about shadowing - be careful to avoid the dreaded "zebra herd." A good rule of thumb is that only one judge should be shadowing at any given ruling. Yes, it is tempting to watch the really interesting ruling going on at the next table, where the players have managed to get seventeen different cards on the stack and one of them shuffled it by mistake, but if there's already a shadow, go and watch some of the games in an area without any judges. You can (and should!) always chat to the judges who were there later.

The best way to learn mentoring is just to try it! Think about how other judges have mentored you: they've watched a few of your rulings discretely (shadowing), they've discussed why you or they did something a particular way, they've offered hypothetical scenarios and tricky rules questions for discussion. Well, none of this is the unique prerogative of high level judges! Next time you're at a tournament, try some of them.

A common misconception is that you can only mentor or review judges less

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competition of a lower level than yourself. This is completely false. Higher level judges will make a point of mentoring whenever they get the chance, but learning is always a two-way process. Make sure that you give feedback to all judges that you work closely with, whatever their level. Even if you did not see the head judge give any rulings, you likely have feedback on topics such as how the judge teams and duties were structured, how they communicated with the floor judges, and how you found their mentoring and feedback style.

Also, submit reviews of other judges you've worked with online at the Judge Center. This serves several purposes: it gives a judge a record of feedback received from other judges to reference later, and it allows judges to assess how they're going (both from the reviews themselves, and by comparison with previous reviews).

Leadership

A level 2 judge is much more likely to be the head judge of an event with a small team of judges or a team leader at a larger event (such as Nationals or a Grand Prix). The ability to effectively organise a small team of judges is thus an important skill for level 2 judges, while not one that many level 1 judges acquire by themselves.

It's hard to get a good idea of what's required of you here without being thrown in the deep end. (At Grand Prix: Brisbane, 2007, I was the head judge of the Trials on Friday. The head judge informed me of this fact over breakfast. That was fun). While I did a decent job of this, I made several mistakes, and in hindsight see many things that I could have done differently. That's learning – I think I'd do a much better job if put in a similar position now, which is the whole point.

Preparing for the exam

The way I prepared for the exam was to read through each of the documents (CR, PG, MFR, UTR, PEIP) (Writing this, I realised that I completely forgot about the PEIP – whoops! This isn't a good idea, folks!) and copy anything that I wasn't sure of into a separate document to study several times (This document ended up at 7-8 pages of things that I wanted to study further). Different study techniques work for different people – use whatever works for you.

I also did practice tests through the Judge Center; by the day of my exam, I had run out of practice tests to do. These are probably the most valuable resource you have, in that they (particularly hard practice tests) are in the same style and cover

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the content of a contest that you will encounter in the exam. Easy practice tests are easier than the level 2 exam, but are still good practice. If you can regularly get 11 or 12 out of 12 on the easy practice tests, and 10 to 12 out of 12 on the hard ones, then you'll be in good shape for the level 2 exam.

Preparing for the interview

It's hard to prepare specifically for the interview, as you really don't have any idea what will be covered in it. I'd suggest giving some thought to your own strengths and weaknesses, as these are likely to be discussed, but other than that, the interview could cover almost anything. General preparation such as reading the documents and judge articles, discussing anything and everything on #mtgjudge, etc is always useful.

One last thing that I cannot emphasise enough – the whole point is to understand things, not memorise answers. If you don't understand an interaction, or the reasoning behind a particular item of policy, or whatever, ask someone! You have an incredible number of resources available – other judges, your level 3+ mentor, the judge and rules lists, #mtgjudge. Ask until you understand as much as possible, and you'll be well prepared.

Links, etc.

Comprehensive Rules (CR)

www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=magic/rules

www.yawgatog.com/resources/magicrules is a useful hyperlinked version, for easier reading.

Reading this all in one sitting may be dangerous.

DCI Document Center

www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dc/doccenter/home

Here you can find the Magic Floor Rules (MFR), the Penalty Guide (PG), the Universal Tournament Rules (UTR), and the Premier Event Invitation Policy (PEIP), as well as other documents (banned and restricted lists, list of suspended players, tournament organiser documents), as well as documents related to other games.

judge.wizards.com

Go here for practice exams, reviewing other judges and reading other judges' reviews of you, as well as other useful features like looking up judges and reporting DQ investigations.

Judge articles

<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=judge/archives>

Articles on all aspects of judging. See also the Friday Ask the Judge columns, above. Note again that older articles probably contain out of date policy or rulings.

Online rules columns

starcitygames.com/pages/articlefinder.php?keyword=ask+the+judge (May take a while to load - there are a lot of them)

mtgsalvation.com/articles/topic/cranial.html

The ones I read regularly are Ask the Judge on starcitygames (daily rules question columns, weekly judge discussion columns) and Cranial Insertion on mtgsalvation (weekly rules question column). Note that older articles may contain out-of-date rulings - if you think something might be out of date, ask someone (#mtgjudge or MTG-RulesL is an easy way to do this)

#mtgjudge

hchat.efnet.org/

You can get onto IRC through software, but this website is an easy way of doing it that doesn't require you to install anything.

Graham White
Level 2 Judge, Sydney.
PenumbraP on #mtgjudge.

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on September 9, 2008



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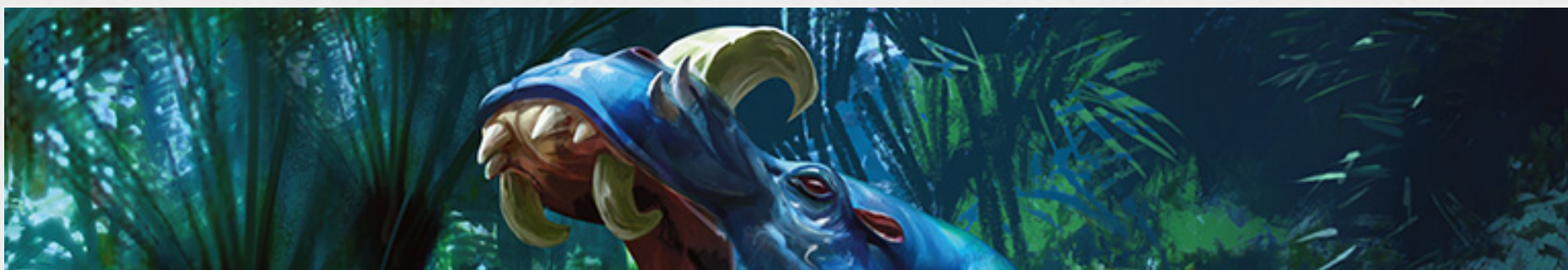


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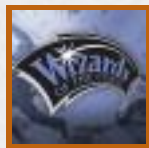


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GETTING TO LEVEL 2

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on November 19, 2007



By Wizards of the Coast

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For getting to my level 2, I had to work very hard.

I made lots of mistakes during the time I was preparing for it, because there were no Levels 2 in the nearby areas to ask for help, and I didn't find any article that fit into this case.

Some time passed, but with help of various fellow judges and my mentors, during the international events I went, I finally accomplished my goal.

After that, I was asking myself "what does a level2 really do?", or what should I do for improving myself as a level2, and that was a little quiz I made in GP Strasbourg (France) and PT San Diego (US), where I received lots of different points of view and ideas for improving from judges all around the world.

So, this article should be like that, "if I had to pass the level 2 again, what should I do?" and once there, continue learning and having fun, because this is all about.

The Beginning

One of the most common mistakes of judges who have been recently promoted to Level 1, is to think that once you've just reach that point, the next step is to immediately work towards Level 2. This is not an ideal thought for a judge to have about the judge program and the promotion between various levels. Being promoted to Level 2 doesn't only mean that you know more or have more experience than the other judges or deserve to be at this level, but that you want to be more involved in the community and the judge program. This means working for the judge program, in various tournaments and outside of them. In order to do

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that you should first think about knowing your own community, the judges and players of your area, and your tournament organizers. These are things that can't be done in just one day.

While preparing for the Level 2 exam is necessary, you have to do more than just that and think about going beyond what a Level 1 might do. When I first thought about it, I was judging the tournaments in my city, I was used to judging the PTQs in the nearby areas, and I had been to a couple of Grand Prix events. I was also studying the Comprehensive Rules a bit, but not the other documents, as I had a lot of experience because of all the tournaments I went to, I thought that I knew the Universal Tournament Rules, Magic Floor Rules and Penalty Guidelines well enough (but it's always good to review...). From the DCI webpage, I saw that I had reached the prerequisites for being a Level 2 judge, and that I had experience to simply take and pass the exam... at least that is what I thought. The reality was that I didn't pass, as I was too confident and not experienced enough. I thought that it would be just like certifying to be a Level 1 judge, but a little bit harder, and I was wrong. However, I had nobody to tell me that I was prepared, and only had myself to determine if I was ready. But I learned some great things about my failure. I know that even if I had passed the exam, I wouldn't have been promoted to Level 2, simply because I was so unprepared.

If you are thinking about Level 2, then keep in mind that even if you think you've fulfilled the prerequisites, this doesn't automatically mean that you'll be promoted. You must think about doing something more for the program and community. More importantly, you should already be doing those things. Don't wait for these things to come to you, because they won't. Move forward and catch them, go for them. Let your fellow judges know about you, about your intentions, about the work that is about to be done... and don't forget to ask for help. There's a great number of judges waiting for you to ask them for help to prepare you for Level 2... so just ask. Find your mentor (or mentors) and do your work.

The Differences

Regarding knowledge and understanding of the Comprehensive Rules, a Level 2 judge could be the same as a Level 1. That is, a Level 2 judge is someone that knows how the rules of Magic work and the community is aware of that. In fact, the community is giving the Level 2 judge some more weight into the magic community, making him a reference (in areas where there are no L3). Because of that, the level 2 must think about working hard and reviewing from time to time the rules, so that the community can count on him.

For example, in-store tournaments of 8 to 16 people, Prerelease events, etc. A Level 2 judge may work more Premiere events (such as Grand Prix Trials or Pro Tour Qualifiers) or even at some international events. A Level 2 will also head judge more events, so he should have more experience from working at more competitive events. Partly this is due to having the recognition of the players and the judge community. But the basic idea is that a Level 2 judge is being recognized as a leader.

As a result, there is an attitude change between a Level 1 judge and a Level 2 judge when it comes to events. By being the leader, the Level 2 judge must be ready to do more things for the community.

Think about reviewing the work done by your fellow judges after every tournament, take te time to talk to them and share opinions. As a Level 2, you're expected to know the right way to:

- Give feedback to the L3+ judges you work with, let them know that they are doing well or if anything could be done in a different way.
- Prepare your local players to the high level tournaments with some articles about Frequent Asked Questions, procedurals, etc.

The level 2 is becoming a reference of the area.

The Motivation

Level 1s are very important to the community. They are frequently the first and only judge that the players get to know, so they serve as the "face" that players know (usually in store tournaments or Prereleases) ... But one thing that you should keep in mind, is that there isn't an obligation to go from Level 1 to Level 2. If you are happy doing what you do in your area by running store tournaments, Prereleases, or giving a hand with local PTQs, this is fine. Likewise, the time that you may spend in helping the community may be limited as well. There's no specific requirement to begin working towards Level 2, which is something that I felt during the first two years of being a Level 1. I worked at my local tournaments, I had some fun running them, and sometimes I got some magic product for me as compensation, sweet!

Once you feel that it could be fun and educational to run tournaments outside your city, try to work as a head judge in competitive events. Consider working at

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International events in order to meet experienced foreign judges, especially once you know a number of judges in your country. If you are curious about the philosophy of how the rules work, judging philosophy, or you're thinking that the methods used in your area should be improved, then you can meet other judges to learn from. This helps you to improve yourself as a judge, and gives you knowledge and concepts from other areas that you can adopt.

If anything above is an example of some of the thoughts you have currently, or is an example of what you are starting to do as a judge, then perhaps you should think about working towards the next level.

The Work To Do

Below is some of the things I found helpful to start doing, as a result of my attempt to certify for Level 2:

1. Communicate with players: Assist players when needed, making sure to be diplomatic and neutral. Help them when they have doubts about how something works, or when trying to resolve a situation that they don't understand. Make players feel comfortable when calling for a judge. You should also begin to understand the investigation procedure, in talking to the affected players and gaining an understanding of their problem. This is important in knowing how the problem can be addressed and that this is the proper resolution of the problem. Especially to keep the problem from being repeated. Take special notice of delicate situations, to make certain that the players understand what is going on and really try to help them to understand why it is being handled this way. As you judge at more tournaments, you're gain more experience to help you better accomplish this.
2. Communicate with judges: One of the best and quickest ways to learn is from an experienced Level 2 or higher judge. Ask them questions you may have, explanations on how certain rules or policies work, anecdotes about their own experience. In every tournament that you go to, take care to meet all the judges you work with. Have a chat with them between rounds or during the day, and talk about what's happened during the tournament. Make sure to review judges if you have feedback for them, tell them how are they doing their work, what could be improved, and ask for feedback from judges. Take some time to know the community and know with what are you working with in your area.
3. Read all the official documents of the DCI, and make summaries of some sections. Translate other section in order to make sure you memorize them. Make sure you understand all the characteristics of a card and try to relate

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4. Read every published judge article. There you will find information that isn't included in the documents of the DCI, like procedurals, rules philosophy, and lots of experiences from other judges from all around the world.
5. Use the Judge Center to create practice exams in order to assess your rules knowledge and help better your understanding of the rules.
6. Search online forums for questions, and try to figure out the answer before looking at the official resolution (Ask the Judge, Saturday Rules School, MTGRULES-L, etc).

The Improvement

If you've done all these things, and been promoted to Level 2, then there are still things to do.

As you were working towards Level 2, you probably learned a number of things. Especially from those things that I listed above. All of these were important in becoming a leader within your community. But even then, you can still improve upon those things you know and make yourself a better judge and leader. I've broken this down into three sections:

1. Improving study habits: You must continue to study the rules and all the official documents of the DCI. Prepare for tournaments by reading the appropriate FAQs, or searching related articles about common mistakes or questions. It can be a good idea to help in some online forum, by helping people with their questions on certain rules or situations. You can also try to contribute to the Judge Center, by creating questions based on what happens during a tournament. Develop your investigation skills, and how you communicate with procedures. Learning from high level judges in order to gain an understanding of the reasons for policy and procedures beyond just what is written in the comprehensive rules.
2. Organization: As a head judge, you should be aware of the procedures involved in different kinds of tournaments and the various formats. You should also be conscious about delegating tasks to your floor judges. Make sure to clearly explain what they should be doing, as part of the mentoring process. Make sure new judges understand how some basic tournament procedures work. Think in advance about what could happen during the tournament, to anticipate possible problems. If you are a floor judge, make sure you are capable of accomplishing your assigned tasks, and what the proper procedures are. Try to support the head judge as much as possible, especially if you have experiences

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3. Community: Since you are now an Area Judge, you need to keep working within your area. Make sure you know yourself, in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Ask for feedback from other judges, and try to give a review of every judge you work with. This helps develop yourself and your community. Try to know every judge who is local to you, and what their strengths and weaknesses are, so you can help them grow as judges. Provide mentorship to Level 0s and Level 1s, and offer feedback to your local Level 3. Share your knowledge with fellow judges by writing articles. And share experiences and thoughts with the judge list. This can even be done for your players, to make sure they've been educated on what are the correct procedures during a tournament.

In Closing

If your local area is now too small for you, and you want to work far beyond those limits, and you're interested in improving your community, you are in a good way for the level 2.

Remember that the Level 2 is becoming a leader, that's why you should think about working in your leadership skills, because the Level 2 is not only ment to know about the Magic Rules or Policys, etc.

Take the time to talk to the other judges you meet in the tournaments, and try to learn about each of them.. one of the purposes of the community, is to make friends and share with them a great hobby that is, Magic The Gathering.

To my mentors, thanks for your ideas.

To Brian and Carlos, my editors, thanks for your time.

To all the judges in the GP and PT, thanks for your knowledge.

If you want to share some opinions, please contact me at judge.dci@gmail.com

Thanks

Niko.

Nicolas Glik, L2, Spain

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on November 19, 2007



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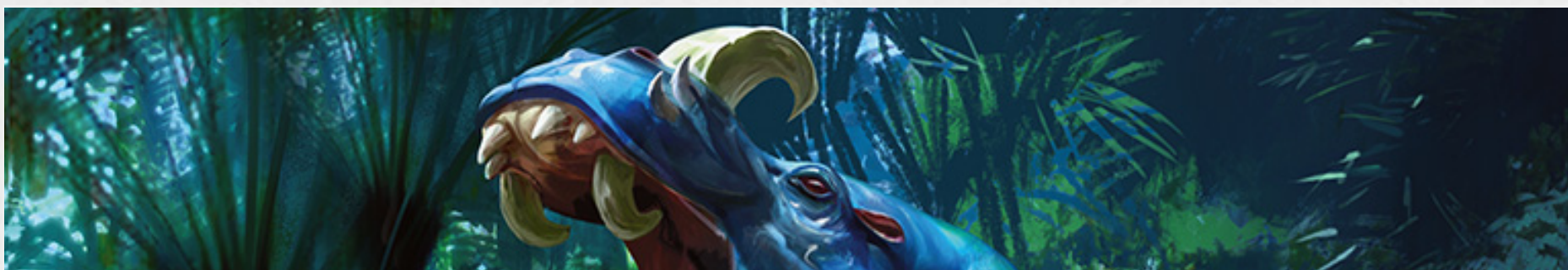


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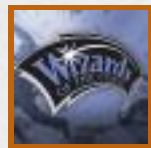


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FROM L2 TO L3

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on March 23, 2006



By Wizards of the Coast

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Are you an L1 and want to know what an L3 is?

Are you an L2 and want to know what to do to become an L3?

Are you an L3 and want to know how to evaluate an L2 who you want to recommend for L3 and to whom you want to give advice?

Are you an L3 and want to be sure that you are, and do, what is required from an L3?

This article will examine the main areas where an L3 should excel and will give some practical advice to see if the time to test has come.

While reading the article you will become aware (if you are not already) that the bar for L3 is high. This article does not try to push every judge to this level. It's meant to be informative for those that are involved, or want to be involved, in the judge program at a higher level. If you are not close to attaining L3, do not use this article as a measurement of your own abilities but as an informative and long-term goal-setting article.

Please keep in mind that not every judge needs to have the desire to go for the next level. Not all judges are in the position that they can, or want to, give the commitment necessary to reach the next level, or have the required skills. Every judge should remain at the level he feels most comfortable and that doing so does not make him any less of a judge.

As a last point, it is important to point out that L3 certification should be pursued as a way to assist players and judges in your local community, as well as expand your

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rules are more common locally than internationally. It is not a means to be able to have the final word on local judge matters, nor it is meant to be recognition of excellent L2 PTQ head judges who have no desire or resources to mentor fellow judges. Before you walk the path towards L3, question your motives and what you hope to achieve through L3.

Rules knowledge

You want to be a L3, what's the first step?

In general, most questions a judge will encounter are rules questions. Therefore the skill that needs to be the base skill for every judge is rules knowledge. It is acceptable for less experienced judges to have a more practical grasp of the rules compared to a more theoretical understanding of the rules.

A practical grasp of the rules is mostly obtained by experience: on the floor, reading the judge list, knowing how certain cards interact. The more practical the knowledge, the more difficulty this person will have answering rules questions on new cards and new interactions (e.g. during pre-releases).

A more theoretical understanding of the rules comes from reading and understanding the comprehensive rules, discussing the framework of the rules (turn, stack, priority, spells, abilities, effects, etc.), and understanding the terminology. A person with this understanding will be able to answer rules questions even when confronted with new cards or new interactions.

The higher the level a judge has, the greater the requirement is for him to have a theoretical understanding of the rules as well. An L3 needs to be able to answer all rules questions that can arise during a tournament situation, not only to give answers to rules questions, but also to explain why things work the way they work and all this using the right terminology. Besides that, an L3 needs to be able to assess the rules knowledge of others judges and players, and be able to determine if it's more practical or theoretical in addition.

There is a misunderstanding, however, that an L3 (or higher) needs to have the ability to redesign the rules from the ground up. This "Guru" level rules knowledge will not help an L3 in his responsibilities. It's nice to have, but not required.

How to prepare and to evaluate?

- Read DCIjudge-L and understand every rules question.

Read articles on the DCLunch site: there are often parts with interesting rules questions.

- Read Saturday School and understand every rules question.
- Take WotC Judge Center practice exams, with a score of 98+ and a full understanding of the situations and the rules involved.
- Try to write rules questions and answers.
- Another very useful experience is to discuss rules situations with other judges, especially during tournaments (you can use real situations or invented questions).

Some questions you can ask yourself to evaluate your preparation:

- Do you know what self-replacement effects are?
- Do you know all the rules changes introduced with the latest expansion?
- Can you come up with rules questions for your fellow judges?
- Do you know how to recognize and handle infinite loops?
- Do you know all 6 layers used to determine interaction of continuous effects?

Want to do something extra?

- Know the philosophy of the rules; this is beyond “simple” rules knowledge and it means analyzing why rules work the way they do. Example: With Ashes of the Fallen in play, you discard Gempalm Incinerator and you want to kill a pro-Spirit creature; can you do it? Is the source of the damage is the card that was cycled or the card that is already in the graveyard at the moment the triggered ability triggered? **Why?**
- Analyze how the Comprehensive Rules are written and try to find ways to make them better. Again, this is beyond “simple” rules knowledge and includes the ability to summarize every rule in a single document in an efficient way.

Penalties

You know the rules. What’s the next step? You have to apply them in a match

An L3 is required to have a full understanding of “How to correct a damaged game state;” one part is to correct the mistake, and another part is to assign the correct penalty.

How to prepare and to evaluate?

Penalty guidelines are the result of DCI policy and philosophy, which has been developed over the years. Several parameters have to be fully understood:

Rules Enforcement Level: This represents the type of the tournament, or, in other words, the goal of the tournament. (Is it an event to make children have fun? Is it a tournament with a cumulative prize of hundreds of thousands dollars?)

Potential for abuse: This represents the advantage a player can gain from a mistake, the probability that the mistake will happen, the probability that the mistake is discovered, and the probability that the mistake is intentional.

An L3 should be able to explain to players and judges **why** there is a specific penalty, in a specific tournament, for a specific infraction. The word “guidelines” means that it is possible to deviate; an L3 should use his best judgment to decide when to deviate from the penalty guidelines and when not to deviate, also taking into account longer term (other rulings in the same tournament or other tournaments in the area) implications of the deviation; every deviation should have a good reason and an L3 should be able to explain why to deviate in a specific situation.

Some questions you can ask yourself to evaluate your preparation:

- Do you know why there is a difference between "improper drawing at start of game" and "drawing extra cards" in the middle of a game?
- Do you know why a game loss is recommended for drawing extra cards for REL 3+, even though a solution is described in the PG for RELs 1 and 2?
- Why are decklist errors game losses and not match losses? Why don't the penalties for decklist errors change with REL?

Want to do something extra?

You probably know something that has changed in the recent past; something

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The penalty for Illegal Maindeck List was downgraded to GL at all RELs) or something about how to solve a specific problem (e.g., Shuffling the random portion of the deck, instead of revealing the cards, for Looking at Extra Cards infractions). Why?

Go through the penalty guidelines and try to understand why those choices have been made. There are always other good choices; try to think about advantages and disadvantages of any choice.

DCI Policies

You know the rules and you know how to solve problems in a match. What's the next step?

You have to manage an entire tournament, and the most important word you have to keep in mind is **consistency**.

An L3 is required to know how tournaments have to be run, in every single detail, because every tournament in the world must be run in the same way (players should never think that every judge has his own rules). An L3 should strive to bring the level of consistency of a PT to his PTQs and demonstrate increased professionalism at all times. Moreover, an L3 is required to know why specific policies exist.

How to prepare and to evaluate?

Penalty and policy are more or less the same; policy documents are the result of DCI philosophy as well.

An L3 should be able to explain to players and judges **why** there is a specific policy to guide how things are done.

One of the best ways to improve policy understanding is to compare your ideas to others. This can be achieved through mailing lists, forums and IRC channels, or, even better, during international tournaments, where you can meet other experienced judges.

Example: Any subject could be a good example, just look at a random line on a policy document, or go to an international tournament and talk with the other judges. Do you show the decklist to top 8 players in a Limited GP? What about removing the standings before posting the pairings of the last round? Would you

Some questions you can ask yourself to evaluate your preparation:

- Do you know why non-verbal communication is allowed in team Rochester, but verbal communication is not?
- Do you know why players can't look at their picks before a booster has been fully drafted? In which document would you find rules for when you can concede a match? Which cards are legal in a format? How do national teams work?
- Do you know if, and why, decklists are shown to the players before every top 8 match?

Want to do something extra?

Once again, policies come from choices made by a group of very experienced judges. Try to think of, and balance, the advantages and disadvantages of any choice and keep in mind that everybody may have a good idea to improve the way tournaments, and the judging community, are managed!

Experience

You know the rules, you know how to solve problems in a match, and you know how to manage tournaments. What's the next step?

Take a look at the new judge level names:

- L1 is now called "Local" Judge.
- L2 is now called "Area" Judge.
- L3 is now called "Regional" Judge.

These names represent the geographical area where a judge should express himself. Of course, a bigger area means larger tournaments, different types of tournaments, greater numbers of judges and different levels of judges.

An L3 is required to take care of everything in his region, and the most important word you have to keep in mind is **community**.

First, there is tournament experience. If you want to become an L3, you should have judged all tournament formats (yes, some Vintage and team tournaments as well), you should have judged at all RELs (from 8-player FNM booster drafts, to 1000 player Grand Prix, or a Pro Tour) and you should have had all roles in a tournament: floor judge, head judge, scorekeeper, floor judge with a less experienced head judge, logistics team leader, deckcheck team leader, etc. You should also be capable of comfortably communicating in English in order to function in an international environment.

Many expert-level judges consider the minimum number of international tournaments to reach the minimum experience required for an L3 is 5 (4 GPs and 1PT), and that a more appropriate number would be 10 (7 GPs and 3 PTs).

Then, there is mentoring experience. If you want to become an L3, you should have mentored some L0s who wanted to become L1 and some L1s who wanted to become L2. Remember that an L3 should be the example to follow for any L0, L1 and L2. For this reason, an L3 should be able to find areas where an L1 or an L2 is weak or strong and should be able to give good advice on how to improve.

Finally, there is community experience. We said the most important word was “community;” in fact, an L3 is responsible for developing his own community. This could be done during tournaments by focusing your attention on the other judges who come to help you, or through the internet (forums, mailing lists, websites, etc). An L3 should have initiative and promote growth of the whole community. This could be done alone, by collaborating with other judges, or by collaborating with the DCI office. What to do? Just use your imagination and do everything you think might be useful for others!

Don't forget one important thing: “community” means “judges **and** players.”

Some questions you can ask yourself to evaluate your preparation:

- Do you feel your approach to tournaments is slightly different than when you first started judging?
- Have you received feedback from different judges, and have you worked to improve yourself?
- Have you ever led a team at an international tournament?

How can you give constructive feedback to your team members?

- How many new L1s or L2s have you successfully mentored during the last year?
- Do you know most of the judges in your region?
- Do you manage mailing lists, forums or websites about judge issues?

Want to do something extra?

If you live in an area where it is difficult to get to an international tournament, you may help yourself by contacting L3+ judges in your area (to judge PTQs with them), or by contacting other L3+ judges through forums, mailing lists, or the Judge Center.

Moreover, even if you are not sponsored for a Grand Prix, you can organize and finance your own travel and lodging. This way, you will have many more opportunities to judge at international tournaments.

Finally, an L3 should be able to give good advice to an L2 who wants to advance to L3.

Leadership

You know the rules, you know how to solve problems in a match, you know how to manage tournaments, and you have lots of experience in managing tournaments and building your community. What's the next step?

An L3 is required to be a respected leader of his community, both during and outside tournaments. Players and judges should recognize him as a trustworthy resource of insight, integrity and experience. Judges and judge candidates should also view him as an approachable mentor and a representative of the DCI judge certification program.

A good leader should be able to delegate tasks and to coordinate teams, according to each judge's skill and experience. Moreover, a good leader has to provide instruction to his people.

A good leader should set the example to follow in everything he does (when he judges and when he plays as well) and should be able to set the example as a follower under another leader; in any case, a good leader should be able to provide constructive feedback to the people he works with. A good leader should be able to

A good leader should take every opportunity to mentor judges in, and out, of tournaments and give them paths toward progress. He should be able to provide constructive feedback as well as suggestions on how to improve. Mentoring is an L3 judge's key responsibility. You can find very useful information about this topic in Paul Morris's article "Principles of Leadership."

Some questions you can ask yourself to evaluate your preparation:

- At each point during a tournament, can you predict what is most likely to go wrong, do you know steps to take to prevent problems, and do you know the best approach to fix those problems?
- Can you identify which managing style is best to use each time you lead a team or a group of floor judges?
- Do players recognize you as a responsible and knowledgeable figure in your community?
- Do judges come to you for advice?

Judge certification

You know the rules, you know how to solve problems in a match, you know how to manage tournaments, you have lots of experience in managing tournaments and building your community, and you are a great leader. What's the next step?

Where would the judge program be if there weren't judges able, and available to test and certify new judges?

An L3 is required to know the difference between L1, L2, and L3 and he's required to be able to administer tests for L1 and L2 candidates.

How to prepare and to evaluate?

There are two main subjects to discuss when you talk with an L1 candidate: motivation and rules knowledge. Unfortunately, while you have a lot of time to mentor judges, you may have very little time to test candidates; in less than half an hour you may have to discover motivation, past experience, future opportunities

The first piece of advice for an L3 candidate is to watch an L3 who is interviewing candidates. The second piece of advice is to interview some candidates, if possible, with the help of the same L3. It's not always easy to find rules questions that can quickly determine if the candidate has the necessary knowledge to be allowed to take the written test.

Some questions you can ask yourself to evaluate your preparation

- Do you know what the DCI wants from an L1 judge, and what role he will serve in the organized play scene?
- Do you know what the DCI wants from an L2 judge, and how his role different than that of an L1?
- Have you ever participated in role-play scenarios, and do you feel that you can make one for your candidates?
- Do you know five rules questions that are appropriate to ask to an L1 candidate?
- What about five rules questions for an L2 candidate?
- During an event with mass certification, would you allow the L1 candidate to take the written test immediately, or would you ask him two or three quick rules question before? Why?

Want to do something extra?

Try to write some new questions for the Judge Exam Center, with the same structure as the questions you've seen, being conscious about what area of rules knowledge you want to examine with each specific question.

Congratulations

You know the rules, you know how to solve problems in a match, you know how to manage tournaments, you have lots of experience in managing tournaments and building your community, you are a great leader, and you know how to test L1 and L2 candidates; what's the next step?

You are now ready to take your L3 written test and to go through three hard hours

For your future as an L3, remember that you now have a role that gives you more responsibility and requires more time commitment.



Congratulations for advancing to L3 or for being a good example of a L3!

This article is a follow-up of a PT London workshop; we would like to thank every judge who was present and contributed to the workshop and to the article.

If you have any opinion, question or comment about this article, we will be happy to read it. Feel free to write to us privately or to send your comments to DCIJudge-L.

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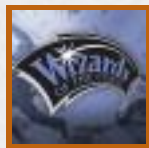
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THREE STEPS TO LEVEL 3

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on November 16, 2005



By Wizards of the Coast

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You've set your sights on level 3? Congratulations. It's a long, fun, yet bumpy ride. What follows is the method that I used to raise myself from a new level 2 to level 3. It is only my experience, but there is no reason why these simple steps can't be applied by anyone. With that, let's jump right in.

Basic Philosophy of Level 3 Testing

If you are ready to become level 3, you will pass. If you are not, you won't. It's that simple. There is no trickery to the test. It does not evaluate obscure skills that you will never use in the field. Instead, it drills down to the core of your judging soul and checks it against the essence of an expert judge.

In other words, if you become a better judge, you will pass. Do not expect that you can continue to do things as you did at level 1 or level 2, then study for a couple of months before your level 3 test. The level 3 test is not like the tests for levels 1 and 2. Your experience--the situations that have come up over the years of your preparation--will be much more important when you reach for level 3.

How do you get this experience? That is where the 3-step formula comes into play.

Step 1: Check Your Attitude

What are your thoughts about judging?

- Do you judge for the compensation?
- Do you hate dealing with players?
- Do you judge just to hang out with your player friends?
- Do you never think about judging outside of tournaments?
- Do you think getting to level 3 will be easy and won't take any extra effort?
- Would you rather be playing than judging?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, I foresee problems with you becoming level 3 unless you change the answer.

Your attitude must be positive. It must contain a passion for judging and all the things that go with it. There is too much trash to pick up, too many angry and cynical people to deal with, and too many long hours to be moving toward level 3 for the wrong reasons.

The bottom line is that you must put your reasons for judging under a microscope and make sure they are the right ones. Are you sure you want the responsibility? Do you just want extra compensation for being head judge? Make sure your reasons are the right ones. Make sure you're doing it so that you can help improve your local judging community, the game of Magic, and, above all, the players.

How can you improve your attitude? It's very simple: focus on the players. Do whatever you should to make sure you are constantly improving the player experience.

I'm going to talk more about attitude and how to enhance player experience in an upcoming article.

Step 2: Establish Your Confidence

Confidence is something you should already be working on. It is the force that makes you believable and respected as a judge. If you don't seem sure of yourself, there is no reason for players, or your staff, to be sure about you.

You can no longer be timid about answering calls. You can't be afraid to deal with

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the Dns Tournament is being rowdy. You can't shy away from applying game losses, match losses, or DQs when you feel they are appropriate. You will make it through more difficult situations as a judge by making a decision that you feel is best and standing behind it 100%.

So here's the confidence rule I live by when judging:

Never seem unsure, only like you're trying to form your response. Once you are 51% sure of your decision, defend that decision like there was never a doubt in your mind that it was right, unless new information is given.

Note: The rule is for subjective situations, such as which player to believe, applying a penalty, etc. It doesn't work so well for straight rules questions.

If you're unsure of a rules interaction, tell the players you're unsure and go check it out in the relevant documents or with your mentor. This will actually enhance your credibility in the player's eyes because they know you will check yourself if you don't know the answer. Therefore, when you don't check yourself, they will assume you know the answer with 100% certainty.

Step 3: Get Lots of Experience

This is where the actual preparation for the testing process is. It's such a vast area that I've broken it down into four parts.

Part 1: Mentor

Finding a mentor is the best way to learn the skills and attitudes that you need to advance to level 3.

Your mentor should be:

- A level 3,4, or 5;
- Accessible to you for fairly frequent personal interaction;
- Available to work personally at tournaments with you;
- Someone you can work well with;

I'll mention how your mentor fits into the picture in each of the next three parts, but the general idea is to get all of the knowledge from their heads into yours.

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What if you have no level 3s or 4s in your area? Here's the plan for you: while working your events, take special note of any situations you would ask a mentor about, if you had one. Once the event is over, post those questions to the judge list. Pay particular attention to the responses you get from level 3s and higher. If they all agree, you now know the correct answer. If there is disagreement, ask for explanation and pick the position you like best. If you notice one particular judge is responding to most of your questions, contact him privately and ask if you can send questions directly to him. If he says yes, you've found yourself an e-mentor.

I would also suggest contacting Doron Singer for tips on working in an area with no high level judges. He has done well in Israel as the only judge there.

Part 2: Work

This is fairly straightforward. Work at as many events as you possibly can. Work at all RELs. Work in any capacity you can. Believe it or not, your experience picking up trash can be just as valuable as scorekeeping.

Don't believe me? What happens if you find drugs, or a stack of foils, or a bunch of backpacks that were reported stolen during the day? What do you do then? Well, you only really know when you actually find them, don't you?

Your mentor should provide feedback as to what you did well during the day, as well as what you could improve on in the role that you played. But mentoring is a two way street. You should actively seek out information from your mentor. Does your mentor have a better way to collect and enter match results slips? A special way of posting pairings that saves time? Squeeze all the information out of your mentor that you possibly can because he has probably seen ten different ways of doing the same thing and he knows which way has proven itself best thus far. Make sure you understand why it's the best way. If you disagree, debate it with your mentor. This will deepen your understand of the way a high-level judge thinks.

During this time, you should get several opportunities to work with DCI Reporter. At first glance, DCI reporter is a fairly straightforward application. Click the proper result, pair the next round, and be off.

The real challenge is when something gets messed up. A result was entered incorrectly. A player wasn't dropped who should have been. What do you do then? What are the options DCI Reporter gives you? The easiest way to learn these things is to have them happen at an event and have your mentor help you fix them. The next easiest is to simply create a fake tournament in Reporter and simulate

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problems. If you should have been dropped, but the next round has been paired. What can you do? Figure it out. Anything you can't figure out, simply ask your mentor or ask the judge list. I don't suggest doing this at the tournament. See if your tournament organizer or mentor has a copy of DCI Reporter you can install on your own computer.

Part 3: Head Judge

After you have attained a broad base of experience working at events, it is time to start head judging events under the watchful eye of your mentor.

By head judging events, I do not mean FNMs. I mean starting to run more prestigious events, like JSSes and GPTs. As the REL increases, and the amount of people in the tournament increases, so will the number, and complexity of, situations that will come up for you to deal with.

As these strange situations occur, have your mentor observe how you deal with them. Afterward, discuss what your thought processes were, what the other options were, and how you could have dealt with it differently.

Make sure your mentor only interrupts you when he believes the way you are doing something could not possibly be right. This will be natural for some mentors. Others will have a hard time not "mothering" you along. He should not stop you simply because you are doing something in a way he wouldn't. Talk with him about this before hand, and correct him if he does it anyway. You will glean far more experience from doing something sub-optimally, and seeing why it is sub-optimal, than simply having your mentor tell you it's wrong before hand.

As a final note, make sure to head judge a couple of PTQs before heading in for level 3 testing. Judging these higher-level events is completely different than the more laid back atmosphere you will find at GPTs and JSSes. Ask your mentor for further information about some of the differences when judging PTQs.

If your tournament organizer isn't giving you the head judging opportunities you need, have your mentor prod him a little bit. If your mentor is the tournament organizer, or your mentor isn't willing to prod, your mentor sees problems that he believes require repair before you advance. Ask him what they are and work at it!

Part 4: High Level Events

The final piece of the puzzle to add to your experience is high-level event

As a level 2, you may be pretty high up on the totem pole in the hierarchy of judges in your area. You're running events, maybe even PTQs. But when you attend a high-level event, your role switches back to that of plain old floor judge.

Don't let this switch annoy you or make you feel less important. These events are a great opportunity to learn. There are high-level judges from all around the world to network with, ask questions of, and generally squeeze every last drop of judge knowledge from their experienced heads.

Think of all the judges at Pro Tour level events as your mentors. Notice I said ALL. Not just levels 3 and up, but also the level 2s. Sponsorship to high-level events is very competitive. You can be assured that those who are sponsored are there for a reason. They are just as likely to have invaluable ideas and perspectives as the other judges. Take their knowledge and make it yours.

These high-level events are also your opportunity to show off your skills to professional level judges. The expert level judge community is a very small, and close knit one. It may not be necessary to become friends with these high-level people, but it is imperative that you show your ability to help make an event run smoothly and your eagerness to learn the more advanced tactics of high-level judges.

The Role of the Judge List

Reading the judge list every day is very important. Here's why:

1. You will be kept current on any special rulings or situations that are occurring frequently.
2. If you pay careful attention, you can see what the differences are between the different levels of judges simply by the responses given on the judge list.
3. You will find important guiding posts from DCI officials. When John Grant or Andy Heckt speak, listen. That's DCI policy in non-document form.

Is it good to participate? Personally, I did not post to the judge list once before I became L3. My position on a given issue was usually adequately explained by someone else. If you have something to add, by all means add it. If not, don't feel pressured to post "me too" just to say you're active on the list. It is important, however, that you share original ideas with the list if you have them so that

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A Special Note about Disqualifications and DCI Policy

It would be very helpful to have DQed somebody before you take your level 3 test. Of course, don't DQ somebody just because you need the practice. But the process of a DQ--the investigation, the player interview, the gathering of evidence, the filling out the report--makes you learn DCI policy theory and principles inside and out.

Ask higher-level judges about disqualifications. Find out their methodology for DQ investigations. Ask for their philosophies on what is cheating and what isn't. I bet you will be very surprised by the answers you receive.

Ask L3s, 4s, and 5s lots of questions. Don't just ask them how to do something, but why they do it as well. Knowing the why of DCI policies and procedure is the thing that separates expert level judges from L1s and 2s.

How to Prepare for the Responsibility

When you become L3, you become "the man" in your area. It is up to you to evaluate other judges, lead the community of players and judges, gain the community's respect, and keep up with the commitments of being an L3. How does one prepare for all that? Simple. If you follow the steps above, talk to high-level judges from around the world, and generally do your best to improve yourself as a judge, you will slide naturally into your position as the head of your area. It's hard work, but it's good fun.

The Final Word

You have before you a solid path to level 3. It's how I got there. And I'm confident that anyone with the proper dedication to these steps can as well. Focus your efforts on becoming a better judge and the level 3 testing process will be easy. Well... easier.

If you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail me at RRMerz@aol.com. I'll be happy to clarify anything that made you scratch your head. Any comments are also appreciated.

Be well and all the best,

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on November 16, 2005



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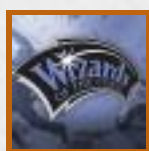


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LEVEL 3 ADVANCEMENT RECOMMENDATION GUIDELINES

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on December 8, 2015



By Wizards of the Coast

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These guidelines are designed to give direction to expert-level judges who wish to recommend a level 2 DCI™-certified judge for advancement. Further, these guidelines will serve as a resource for current judges who wish to petition for advancement. As with all such guideline documents published by the DCI, the emphasis on judge advancement should be on the spirit of the requirements rather than the letter of the rules. For example, if a judge fulfills all the technical requirements, but fails to impress with his or her experience in the field, then you should not submit a recommendation for that individual.

Among the most important duties of an expert-level judge are the education and training of judges with whom he or she works. In regard to a level 2 judge who approaches you for advancement recommendation, this means that you must be able and willing to identify the potential candidate's strengths and weaknesses. If you are going to recommend the candidate, you should share with him or her the letter you mean to submit to the DCI worldwide judge certification manager. The best recommendations detail both strengths and weaknesses and demonstrate your familiarity with the candidate. Even more important, if you should deny recommendation to a candidate, you should be very specific about why you did so. This discussion should include counsel on steps the candidate should take in order to prepare for advancement at a future date.

All recommendations for DCI judge certification advancement to level 3 or higher

PLF-1252
Certification Manager. This applies to judges living in regions that report to a DCI judge coordinator in a local or regional office outside the United States. Qualifications that a candidate for level 3 judge advancement should have follow.

- A level 3 candidate should be competent to run a Pro Tour™ Qualifier anywhere in the world. This entails skills and knowledge appropriate to head judge a DCI-sanctioned event at rules enforcement level 3. For this, a full understanding of the DCI Penalty Guidelines, Universal Tournament Rules, and *Magic: The Gathering*® Floor Rules is necessary.
- A level 3 candidate should have expert-level rules knowledge. This entails familiarity with *Magic*® card templating and current knowledge of *Magic* rules team rulings. Strong literacy in English is essential for this, and the level 3 judge exam is administered only in English. This guideline also necessitates regular and consistent access to the online resources available from the DCI.
- A level 3 candidate should have a good understanding of DCI Reporter (DCIR) software. This means that he or she should be familiar with a current version of DCIR and able to act as head scorekeeper of a Pro Tour Qualifier in any of the formats designated by the DCI.
- A level 3 candidate should understand the *Magic: The Gathering* tournament structure as established by the DCI. This includes the ability to explain sanctioning procedures, the variable K-value ratings system, how invitations are extended over various levels of events, and the appeals process.
- A level 3 candidate should be a respected member of his or her *Magic* community. This means that players who have had experience with the candidate should recognize him or her as a fair and firm arbiter of disputes. Players and judges should also see the candidate as an expert to consult in all manner of *Magic* questions, ranging from game rules to policy matters.
- A level 3 candidate should be a diplomat and an ambassador. This means that he or she should represent the DCI and *Magic: The Gathering* organized play in a positive manner that encourages participants to continue and increase their involvement in the game. The candidate should also demonstrate clarity and succinctness when making rulings.

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on December 8, 2015



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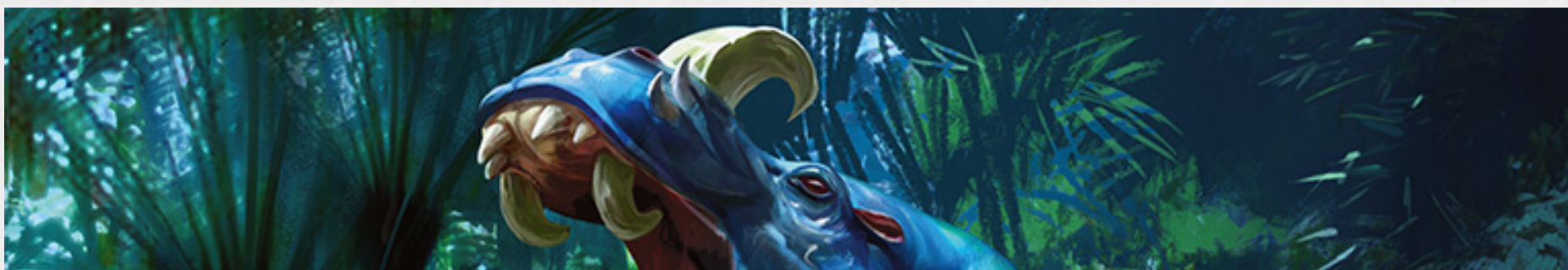


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Guiding the Planes with SeaCat

Adventures in Judge Peacekeeping

Applying a Lens of Clarity to the US Southeast Suspensions

Posted on February 1, 2016 by Sean Catanese

I’ve been asked by some folks, both directly and indirectly, to help the broader judge community understand some of the internal workings and decisions which led to the suspensions of several US-Southeast judges. If you’ve been under a rock or disengaged from the judge program, these judges were part of a private group that Wizards found to be involved in a major early leak of three unreleased cards from Oath of the Gatewatch. By all accounts, the gentlest way to describe that aftermath is a “mess”.

This mess has caused some significant rifts in our community. As I’ve seen these rifts develop, I’ve also seen a fundamental imbalance in the information being shared. In-depth details of the internal processes at Wizards which led to the suspensions aren’t public, and I don’t expect those details to be shared beyond what’s already been stated and restated. This article doesn’t delve into the details from Wizards’ side. I don’t speak for them and I don’t oversee their decision-making. But I don’t see any good reason not to share the internal details of the [Judge Conduct Committee](#)’s (JCC) involvement in the interest of trying to mend some of those rifts.

I hope that by sharing these details, someone understands what happened a little better from one more of the many perspectives involved.

Dissecting the Timeline

If we’re preserving this mess for posterity in the hopes that the Judge Program can identify problematic decision making and make better decisions in the future, it doesn’t help anyone to be obscure or indirect. What follows below uses some pretty direct language. It captures the content of many messages and discussions, but I just can’t capture everything here.

The Regional Coordinators Advisory Committee (RCAC), JCC, and L4+ judges had threads comprised of more than 200 messages exchanged in just a few days of the announcement. Capturing all of that information here would be overly laborious and easily risk mis-characterization. It would also lack the consent of the others involved.

Where I quote a message, it’s the full text of what I sent unless noted otherwise. When I’m describing what others said, I’m usually paraphrasing the messages I received to inform my decision-making (to the extent I had decisions to make), but there are a couple obvious quotes. If anyone is interested in clarifying further or thinks I’ve missed something important, I’m open to hearing it.

Enough with the preamble. Here we go.

On December 18, I got a message from [Aaron Hamer](#), the Interim Judge Community Manager, letting me know





about the suspensions for all of the judges involved. There were no details about leaks or cards, and no indication that more details would be forthcoming. Wizards’ generally doesn’t share its internal investigation documents, and the JCC is no exception.

We don’t oversee them in any fashion. We abide by their decisions because they’re not decisions that we’re empowered to remake or question. There’s a fundamental dependency of the Judge Program on Wizards, and that’s not something I was (or am) capable of changing in that moment or any other. Ultimately, Magic is Wizards’ game and Wizards’ property, simple as that.

Knowing I would be unable to change or challenge the outcome, I triaged my emotional reactions and moved to the next tasks: damage control and continuity. Of course, I had lots of questions. What happens to their projects? Had they been notified? Would there be a public acknowledgement? Would they be able to access the Judge Center?

By the end of Friday, I still didn’t know the answers to those questions or whether anything had been sent to the judges (though they were in progress), so I just had to wait.

On the morning of Monday, December 21, I got confirmation that the messages had gone to the judges and I could begin notifying the JCC, RCAC, and L4+ judges.

Even that morning, it was unclear to me whether there would be a public acknowledgement. But Aaron was already working on it, of course, and he had lots of competing priorities in the moment. Considering all that he was given to do, I consider it a miracle that he made it through that day with his sense of purpose intact (to say nothing of the misdirected rage heaped on him later). To be clear, this is me projecting my own perceptions. I’m sure that final message wasn’t everything he wanted it to be, and neither was the follow up, but we work within the system of constraints we have. It just gets awkward when the people making the decisions aren’t the ones who have to communicate them (and perhaps that’s a theme here).

I didn’t want to delay the process any more than it had been already, and as soon as I had confirmation that the affected judges had been notified by Wizards, I sent this message to the JCC:

I’ve been informed by WotC that the following two judges have been suspended for two years. As they will lapse due to inactivity in this period, their judge levels are being set to “uncertified” in DCIX and JudgeApps.

Francisco Iramain (L2, US-SE)

Adam Hubble (L2, US-SE)

In addition, the following twelve judges have each been suspended for three months:

Justin Turner (L3/RC, US-SE)

William Matt Williams (L3, US-SE)

CJ Crooks (L3, US-SE)

Bryan Prillaman (L3, US-SE)

Ben McDole (L3, US-SE)

Brian Guess (L2, US-SE)

CJ Shrader (L2, US-SE)

George FitzGerald IV (L2, US-SE)

Mike Lopez (L2, US-SE)

Katie Temple (L1, US-SE)

Will Besant (L1, US-SE)

We do not have details from WotC regarding the reasons for these suspensions, and we will not be getting further details as far as I know. We do not have control or oversight concerning these outcomes.

However, the protocol for handling a suspended judge still applies in these cases just as it has with other judges who have been suspended by the PIC or WotC.

Cri is in the process of establishing a continuity plan for Turner's RC duties. Backup leaders for the major projects led by the judges listed above (Exemplar, for instance) have been notified.

In addition, I'll be sending a brief notification to the RCAC and L4+ as with past similar cases. These will be listed with their expiration dates in the Misconduct Log as well, with the reason being simply "WotC-issued suspension".

A quick note on the jargon above, the PIC is the Player Investigations Committee, which reviews disqualifications from tournaments and issues their associated penalties. This message is essentially the same as the ones I sent to the L4+ list and RCAC later that day, except it also included the first draft of the JCC's message that would be sent to each judge later that day (the final message is further down), with a request for help in editing it if there was any way we could soften the blow.

The first reactions from the JCC members were, like mine the Friday previous, surprised and dismayed. I've combined my messages in the conversation with the JCC, but these are the points I covered with them, copied and pasted:

We have not been told whether there will be a public announcement by WotC. We have asked. Messages to the L4+ and RCAC will make it clear that:

- 1. This was not a JCC decision,*
- 2. We do not know details, and*
- 3. We do not know if we/when will get details.*

WotC has informed me that the reason for these suspensions is "distributing confidential information". They have approved including this in the notification to L4+ and RCAC.

Within the JCC, we discussed how project continuity was to be maintained, and we talked about how to be more supportive in communicating with the suspended judges. [Jeremie Granat](#) especially provided some very good language to this effect.

Once the notifications had been sent to the L4+ judges and RCAC, I sat with the messages for the individual judges as drafts. Normally we'd wait for the RCAC and L4+ judges to digest the information further or make suggestions, but these suspensions were different. They were already in effect, and our messages were needed to help clarify what it means to be suspended and a judge.

It was several hours before I worked up the nerve to hit "send". I considered several of these judges friends. But neither the RCAC nor JCC had any decisions to make in this situation. I couldn't change the outcome. I couldn't even get the information I would need to make an informed decision on whether the outcome was a just one.

constraints of the system and information we have. So I hit “send”. Here’s the message:

The Judge Conduct Committee has been made aware of your DCI/WPN suspension. This also means that you will be suspended from the Judge Program during this time.

I realize that this is a very challenging time for you, but I want to be clear here, too: You are a valued member of our community. We believe you are capable of overcoming this and fully rejoining the judge program once your suspension is over.

Below are a few answers to what we expect are questions running through your mind right now.

Your suspension from the Judge Program begins and ends on the same days as your DCI/WPN suspension begins and ends.

The length of your suspension may cause your certification status to change or lapse due to inactivity. If that happens, the normal process for recertifying will apply.

You are also expected to avoid acting as a judge or representing yourself as a judge during this time. You may not participate in any DCI or WPN sanctioned event as a judge. You may not participate in judge conferences.

The organizers for any events announced through JudgeApps for which you have currently been selected will be notified of this suspension.

Your JudgeApps account will remain active. However, you are expected to refrain from participating in discussions on forums limited to certified judges beyond reading them.

You may not participate in the Exemplar Program. Recognitions of you or submitted by you while suspended will not be published and will not have mailings associated with them. Planned mailings for recognitions submitted prior to your suspension (e.g. Wave 3) may proceed at WotC’s discretion.

You are not expected to remove yourself from non-JudgeApps groups or forums limited to certified judges, but you may be removed from those groups at the discretion of the individuals controlling them, following any protocol those groups decide to follow.

Your participation in ongoing judge projects is also suspended during this time. The leader of a project you have contributed to may decide to retain you as a participant in their project to ensure the project’s continuity when your suspension ends. These decisions are up to each project’s leader. If you lead a project, you should immediately hand off your leadership role to that project’s backup leader.

Your access to the Judge Center will not be affected by this suspension. You can still submit reviews, take practice exams, and otherwise use the Judge Center. You are encouraged to complete any reviews in progress. You should hand off any candidates for certification or advancement to another judge to ensure continuity of mentoring and avoid unnecessary delays.



If you’ve followed the public discourse closely, you’ll see that there were several things I explained in this message that were later changed. For instance, the interactions with the [Exemplar Program](#) for these judges will be very different from how I described it. The suspended judges should see no impact to their Exemplar mailings for either Wave 3 or Wave 4, and that should be the case for other suspended judges in the future.

Some of the language in that letter also seems pretty vague. What’s “representing yourself as a judge” anyway? In general, a suspension is designed to have the suspended judge take a break from active, visible engagement while avoiding the loss of cutting them out completely. That change is complex and nuanced and difficult to capture concisely. The language in the letter is meant to convey that, but it clearly needs some improvement.

I’m convinced we need a middle ground between a warning letter and decertification, and this is the best we’ve come up with so far. There are multiple avenues that can lead to a suspension (WotC, PIC, or JCC), but “how a suspension works” should be clear and consistent. I’m also sure the JCC will find a way to improve it (and the language we use to communicate it) in the future.

In any case, what happened in the ensuing week is more or less complete in the public discourse if you look for it. Conflict and drama ensued. Each of the L4+ judges and many others shared their own messages in social media, trying to quell misinformation and encourage patience while the judges involved got their appeals together.



Here’s what I posted to Facebook:

Lots of other judges have posted their feelings about today’s Judge Program events in more eloquent and heartfelt words than I can muster in the moment. I’m not going to discuss the issues that led to their suspensions. They’re working on appeals. I trust it will resolve appropriately. That’s not my circus. This isn’t that post.

Absent my own flowery language, let me rely on those among whom I have found hope and motivation today:

[Dan’s](#) summary to the US NW Judges is exemplary in its simplicity and pragmatism. I admire his willingness to share his own feelings while also remaining open and present to help others.

[Nicholas’](#) words to his region make me wish he was also my RC. He acknowledges the pain, fear, and dismay that many are feeling right now. And he reminds us to meet it with patience, with discretion, and diplomacy. Better advice is hard to come by.

[Riki’s](#) drive to find continuity and purpose in the face of mounting obstacles and negativity has been truly inspiring. It takes courage to ask for help, and more to accept it. He’s doing both and then turning it around to serve others. I can only hope to do so well.

Please, take their words to heart, and be excellent to one another.

in any of it. I was along for the ride like anyone else.

Turner reached out to me on December 29 to ask if there was a chance of changing course with regard to program-related projects rather than event-related tasks. I told him it would be difficult to change course without direction from Wizards, but that I would pose the issue to the L4+ judges, as the JCC was literally in the middle of its planned end-of-term transition. Here's what I sent to the L4+ judges after that conversation:

Turner reached out today with an interest in changing some of the restrictions placed on him and the other suspended judges with regard to participation in the judge program.

Basically, his request is to remove everything that was stated in the message from the JCC. His argument is that the Magic Judge Code only references suspensions from the Player Investigations Committee, not from WotC directly. In writing the Code, we frankly considered that the PIC was the only entity which would issue a suspension of any length requiring the mess of a suspension. We expected that if WotC had an issue with a judge, it would be severe enough that they just wouldn't be a judge anymore. He also argues that it wasn't "misconduct" which led to his suspension.

To use his words, Turner's message is: "Hey IMO let me exploit that loophole 🤔 or as I'd put it, hold me to the printed standard you've published XD".

My opinion is that these are technical loopholes that should be fixed through revisions. Conveniently, we're issuing a revised Code at the beginning of the year, cleaning up this sort of language.

If we reverse this, it means allowing the suspended judges to participate in conferences go back to leading Exemplar, etc. They can already continue to be a part of ongoing projects if the project lead is OK with that, but leading the projects feels different.

Overall, this feels like he's trying to maintain a sense of normal operation in the face of losing quite a lot with little warning. He also wants to keep contributing, and I want to support that in the interest of him continuing once his suspension is over.

However, this isn't a decision I feel I can make on my own, even as a Sphere Leader. This has the potential to undermine WotC's decision, just as if we had not treated these judges like any other suspended judge when the suspensions were handed down. It will probably also look like favoritism. If we turn him down, there's a nonzero chance that he blows up at us, or waits and blows up at us after his appeal is decided by WotC.

I'd ask the JCC, but I am literally in the middle of changing over to the new committee members and putting together a year-end wrap up message

So, here's my question for this group, all of whom I trust, and all of whom I believe have a valuable perspective on this topic:

Do we let the suspended judges out of the "No submitting Exemplar rec, no project leading, no



Options include:

A: “Yes to helping behind the scenes, no to visible leadership tasks”,

B: “Yes, just let them do whatever they want as long as it’s not on an event, per the letter that came to them directly from WotC”,

C: “No, this is a technical loophole, identified by a significant and exceptional circumstance, fix it and have them wait until they’re no longer suspended”

D: Something else I haven’t considered yet.

Looking forward to hearing from each of you if you feel like you have a perspective to contribute.

Over the next couple days, there was discussion among the other L4+ judges over just how to approach this question. Just as in the initial response, there was no solid consensus among the L4+ judges. At least two were in the “B” camp, with the rest in a variety that sounded mostly like “C until we hear different from WotC, then maybe A or B depending on WotC’s answer”. Here’s what I shared with them as my own perspective on the issue, midway in that conversation.

I’m personally on board with C until I hear different from WotC, too. But as this affects more than just the JCC, I don’t want to make this decision without some understanding of this group’s perspective.

The JCC did not review any information in these cases, and probably won’t be able to even if we requested it. We also don’t review any information about PIC cases that don’t involve a judge-related issue. Without that, we have nothing to base a case on short of re-investigating it, which would interfere with WotC’s own investigation.

What if the statement provided to us by a judge is different than the one they provided to WotC (on appeal or otherwise)? We wouldn’t know without seeing WotC’s files, and that isn’t happening for outside-of-events stuff. That reveals their internal investigation techniques, and I’m sure it reveals more than their lawyers are comfortable with.

So we trust WotC. It’s their game. We go along with their decision.

The Code has language in it that if you’re suspended as a player, you’re also suspended as a judge. There’s a technical loophole in it that says “by the PIC” rather than “by the PIC or WotC” because we just assumed anything bad enough to result in a WotC suspension would be a suspension long enough to decert by lapsing.

If WotC doesn’t trust you to play in events, and your DCI number won’t allow you to be entered as a judge for an event, then at some point we’re just ignoring or undermining WotC’s decision when we say “OK, but attend this conference and have some foils anyway” or “Some judges disagreed with WotC and protested by giving you Exemplar recs, so have some foils for that, too”.

I understand that this decision specifically feels like it should be contested. And it is being contested. Their appeal contests the decision with the people who made it, and who are best positioned to make an informed decision about the appeal’s merits.

The JCC and the Judge Program don’t have that capability. Any decision we make in this case

Without a meaningful consensus on a change to our approach or course of action, the decision defaulted to waiting until the appeals were resolved.

This was reinforced a couple days later on January 3 when Bryan Prillaman sent a lengthy letter asking for essentially the same things Turner had already requested. I followed up with a phone call to Turner on January 4, which was followed by a text conversation which ended with me committing to writing this very article you're reading now.

As it's mentioned above, we were already in the middle of revisions to the [Magic Judge Code](#), as part of the review inherent to continuous improvement, where we ask questions like, "What felt right about this year's resolutions? What didn't?

What needs to be updated?" If you're interested in the details, the Magic Judge Code has a changelog for exactly this purpose. This mess did highlight specific loopholes to close and language to clarify, obviously. But the process of revising the document was an effort already in progress when we learned about the suspensions, and not done solely in response to it.

The L4+ thread ended with a message from Aaron Hamer expressing a commitment that the appeals were in process, and communication with everyone involved and the program generally would improve. For my part, I believe wholeheartedly that Aaron has lived up to that commitment to the absolute best of his ability, and we have been fortunate to have him in his position.

That's where the "insider" part of the timeline ends for me, effectively. I'm sure there were other conversations going on, but I wasn't a part of them. Johanna directly took on further inquiries to the JCC, per her new duties (thank you!). I focused on my next GP (Oakland, the following weekend). Helene's statements ending the suspensions were published on January 13, and the JCC followed immediately, with the discussion starting within two hours of Helene's announcement to the RCs and L4+ judges, and its messages coming from Johanna on January 14.

Judge Conduct Committee Membership and Selections

Some have raised the question of whether my change from leadership of the JCC had anything to do with this case. It didn't. If you're looking for proof here's the cover letter, in its entirety, from my JCC application for the new term. I submitted it November 30:

I'm interested in continuing this work, and assisting the incoming chair for the sake of continuity, but I'd like to set a precedent of no chair serving for more than one term consecutively.

There's a reason the internal investigations unit of every law enforcement agency is its highest-turnover unit. And I see a lot of parallels to the work of the JCC in that. The work involves routinely losing faith in those you trust, and on whose trust you personally depend. But the last year within the Committee has fully convinced me that its work is necessary with the Judge Program where it is today.

It also takes a toll. Handing off JCC leadership duties to Johanna was such a relief that it can best be described in an anecdote from my life outside of Magic. My "real world" job held a blood drive that week and for the first time in a long while the screening nurse didn't ask me to sit down and relax first to bring my blood pressure down into the preferred range.



proactively anyway) of whether this issue affected the JCC’s 2016 selections. Two of the suspended judges applied, so did their suspension unduly alter their chances? The short version is pretty simple: No. To expand a bit, I’m going to take you into the exciting work of selecting the JCC in a little more detail.

Since it seems to be a point of confusion for some, here are a few things you should know about how the JCC is selected. It doesn’t select its own members. The process is pretty mundane, and that’s intentional. Many people collaborate to make it happen. The work is stressful enough without needing to campaign for a position or worry about drama and interpersonal politics.



People apply. L4+ and (new this time!) RCs vote on a five-point scale. Five of the nine 2015 members were among the groups voting. Four of those five applied for the 2016 term. Three of those five remain on the JCC in 2016. In tabulating the votes, each person’s vote concerning themselves is excluded from tabulation. I do some math on a spreadsheet and share it with the L4+ judges.

We discuss it and arrive at a group that has some new folks, represents the program well, retains some continuity, considers diversity, and can hopefully make good decisions. Our members are publicly known and announced, and they’re available to discuss problems or questions. It’s not some shadowy cabal of conspirators. We’re just getting a pretty damn difficult job done the best we can.

The suspensions did not meaningfully change the selections for the 2016 term. But I’ve come to that understanding by examining the data in detail, so it’s only fair that I share my process with you. Here’s what I’ve found:

Based on the timestamps of the JCC selection votes, there is the potential for up to four of the thirteen votes cast by the RCs to have been affected by the suspensions. One of those four contacted me to explain that their vote was affected by the suspension. So I went back and re-did the math to compare both scenarios. Throwing out the post-suspension votes had no effect on the suspended judges’ absolute scores and no effect on their relative rankings among the other applicants, either.



Wrapping Up

So that’s the situation from my perspective. It’s not often that we go into this level of public detail into the process and decision making within the JCC, but this situation was significant and exceptional in several respects and it didn’t truly involve many decisions on the part of the JCC, either.

As I described in a few areas above, clearly we can do better. We need to communicate better on several levels. The relationship between the people who make these kinds of decisions and those who are tasked with communicating them could use some additional clarity. Some of these issues are already in the process of being worked out, but others are more complicated. This is an exercise in continuous improvement, and I don’t know that there will truly be a future point at which we can say the job is done.

I’m sure some of you reading this have more questions. The comments here are a fine place to ask those questions, and I’ll do my best to answer them.

Guiding the Planes with SeaCat

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